

Proposed Interventions for Schools and Districts At Risk
December 2005

Kentucky Department of Education Proposal

In addition to the current consequences that apply for schools in Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) status, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) proposes to intervene in a more intensive and focused way in those schools and districts that have shown the least progress in raising performance and closing achievement gaps. These schools and districts are at risk and the Kentucky Department of Education will need to provide them with more intensive assistance. The interventions will become effective in fall 2006.

In order to meet the demand for more aggressive intervention in the above mentioned schools and districts, the Kentucky Department of Education is recommending an intensive, collaborative, assistance option designed to both build capacity at the school and district level and provide essential support and oversight for improved student achievement. This assistance option is designed around a *voluntary*, targeted assistance team approach. The team will be made up of the local superintendent, an assigned superintendent mentor from Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, a representative from the Kentucky School Boards Association, a Highly Skilled Educator, and a Kentucky Department of Education administrator. This team will be charged with developing and implementing a district/school improvement plan to include intervention strategies outlined under the five categories (School Culture, Leadership, Articulated Curriculum, Effective Instruction, and Data-driven Decisions) defined on pages 2-5, in addition to other intervention strategies identified as district-specific needs. The improvement plan will require the endorsement from all five members of the team before it can be submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education for final approval and release of programmatic funds to support implementation.

There are currently 50 districts trending toward the Tier 3 category under NCLB in the fall of 2006. (Eight of the nine schools trending toward Tier 4 and 5 are located in these districts.) These districts, therefore, would be facing the following NCLB consequences:

1. Deferring programmatic funds or reducing administrative funds
2. Replacing district personnel relevant to the failure

The *voluntary assistance option* described above would be a part of consequence number one in that KDE would hold programmatic funds until a Tier 3 district plan was collaboratively developed and approved, at which time funds would be released to the district for implementation of the plan.

Districts that do not agree to this voluntary assistance program would receive direct intervention by the Kentucky Department of Education utilizing sanctions outlined in KRS 158.785 (attached).

Proposed Interventions

I. School Culture

Cultural Assessment

Successful school leaders know that nothing is more important about a school than its culture. The following are proposed interventions to address ways to improve school culture in low-performing schools:

1. A school culture assessment will be conducted by a trained KDE team prior to a scholastic audit. A summary report of the cultural assessment will be reviewed with the school as a portion of the formal scholastic audit exit report.
2. Each school will form an internal team to receive on-going and intensive professional development on the items identified in the culture assessment process as needing improvement such as concepts of instructional discipline, school organizational culture and climate and strategies that promote and sustain a healthy climate and culture. The mandatory team will consist of, but not be limited to, the following stakeholders: district level staff person, principal, teacher leaders, counselor, parent, special education teacher, classified staff, community/business member, and council member.
3. The team will be trained by KDE staff and auxiliary stakeholders to meet the specific needs identified in the culture assessment and SISI audit/reviews. The school team will be responsible for training school staff. The school team will also be responsible for sharing an overview with parents and other community stakeholders via a variety of methods.
4. The school team will develop measurable goals and strategies to be added to the school improvement plan. The strategies must include a model for professional development with short and long-term goals/timelines. Strategies will also be developed to promote parent and community involvement in improving student achievement. The strategies should include expected outcomes against which to measure progress.

Mentoring/Building Positive Relationships

Research confirms for students to be successful, they need to have a sense of connection to their school. One significant way is having a positive relationship with an adult at school. It is essential that all teachers are made aware of the research around relationship building and its impact on student achievement. Students will work hard for those with which they have a positive, caring, relationship that is grounded in respect and trust. The following is proposed to assist in the establishment of mentoring programs:

1. Trainings by KDE/Special Education Cooperatives will guide schools on effective ways to build opportunities to positively connect and interact with all students.
2. Trainings by KDE/Special Education Cooperatives will occur to guide schools on strategies for relationship building in the classroom.
3. With guidance and support by KDE/Special Education Cooperatives, schools will receive training/implementation strategies on positive interactions in the classroom through the use of effective feedback and positive ratio of interactions.
4. Every staff member (certified and classified) will “adopt” an individual student to mentor throughout the school year. Schools will ensure that every child is “adopted”.

With guidance and support by KDE/Special Education Cooperatives, schools will develop processes to monitor success/effectiveness of adult-student interactions, student connectedness to their school, and opportunities for all students to be actively involved in their school at various levels.

II. Leadership

Leadership is recognized as a significant factor in the success or failure of a school. There is a great need for effective educational leadership and a need to hold those in leadership positions accountable for student learning. The following proposals address leadership:

1. Require superintendents and principals of these schools and districts to join leadership teams to receive targeted, research-based leadership training.
2. KDE will work with educational cooperatives, universities and other partners such as KASA and KASS to provide guidance and training of these administrators, while KDE will conduct monitoring and implementation support. The training will focus on school culture, balanced leadership, articulated curriculum, effective instruction, data-driven decisions, measuring progress, and engaging the community.
3. Require superintendents and principals of these schools and districts to work with assigned mentors. Mentors will target decision-making and best practice in areas of growth identified by the district and school scholastic audits.
4. Identify teacher leaders at these schools to form instructional leadership teams that will assist in improving instruction, facilitating embedded professional development, and advancing the knowledge and skills of the staffs. Instructional leadership teams will be formed following audit team recommendations.
5. Based on the consequences for low-performing schools, KDE will intervene with intensive leadership assistance by including a highly skilled principal for identified crisis schools. The \$90,000 beginning salary cap will be waived in order to recruit and place Highly Skilled Principals (HSP) or Highly Skilled Educators (HSE) in low-performing schools.
6. Any sitting principal in one of these schools may be replaced by a Highly Skilled Principal (HSP) based on the results of the scholastic audit and the recommendation of the scholastic audit team to the Commissioner. Any sitting principal of one of these schools identified by the scholastic audit and the scholastic audit team as “promising,” may continue in his/her role as principal, guided by a Highly Skilled Principal (HSP) mentor until such time the “promising” principal is able to effectively lead the school to higher achievement levels or is deemed a detriment to the school improvement process.
7. School councils of these schools will, as a part of the audit process, have their level of “functionality” reviewed for impact on student achievement. The audit team will recommend to the Commissioner whether the school council’s authority should be: (a) retained, (b) transferred to the superintendent, or (c) transferred to an HSE. If the audit team recommends a transfer of the school council’s authority, it must also recommend whether the council should continue to function in an advisory role or be disbanded. (applicable under KRS 160.346)

III. Articulated Curriculum

An articulated curriculum is an instructional as well as an accountability tool to ensure the standards are being addressed and communicated in these schools. The following proposed interventions address articulated curriculum:

1. Require staff in these schools to participate in KDE-sponsored high quality professional development that focuses on school culture, standards-based curriculum (academic expectations and program of studies), instruction (research-based practices) and assessment (revised core content for assessment).
2. Require these schools to identify and communicate when (curriculum maps) and how (units of study) the content considered essential for all students would be taught.
3. Require the school leadership to create a plan that includes review of lesson plans, walkthrough observations and feedback to teachers, and discussions with students about their learning to ensure that teachers are teaching the essential content based on standards and incorporate such into the school improvement plan.
4. Require schools to use their Commonwealth School Improvement Funds and Title I school improvement funds for teacher work sessions to develop prescriptive instructional strategies, materials and resources and assessments that will be used to teach the core content and program of studies in areas identified for needing improvement. These will also be used to pay consultants to model lessons, provide additional time for teachers to plan and collaborate on curriculum development, analysis of student work and assessment data for the purpose of driving instruction.

IV. Effective Instruction

Research supports that effective instruction plays a significant role in raising student achievement. The following proposed interventions address effective instruction:

1. Require these schools to develop instructional leadership teams in these schools to be trained by a support network of specialists (e.g., Achievement Gap Coordinators, District Support Facilitators, Highly Skilled Educators, Targeted Assistance Coaches, Cooperatives and Literacy Coaches) with expertise in meeting the needs of all students who will help with the implementation of strategies designed to bring all students to the level of proficiency. District personnel must also be included in this training.
2. Require the district and school instructional leadership teams to provide professional develop for all teachers and paraeducators (persons who have instructional support responsibilities) in these schools on effective instructional practices for ensuring the appropriate inclusion of all children in instruction.

At the October 2005 Kentucky Board of Education meeting, several additional proposals were offered by various KBE members for further investigation as possible interventions. The first request was to determine if a mechanism existed for providing incentives to attract highly skilled teachers and principals to the most challenging situations. The results are as follows:

KRS 157.075 permits a local school district to develop differentiated compensation programs that provide additional compensation above the single salary schedule described in KRS 157.420 and defined in KRS 157.320. **Providing incentives to recruit and retain highly skilled teachers to serve in difficult assignments and hard-to-fill positions** is one of the purposes stipulated in the statute. KRS 157.075 also establishes a professional compensation fund in the State Treasury. This fund may

receive state appropriations, gifts, and grants from public and private sources and federal funds. The fund has provided funds to five districts for a two-year period for the purpose of piloting differentiated compensation plans. A final report was issued to the Kentucky Department of Education in September 2005. It is recommended that we encourage districts with low-performing schools to consider these incentive programs.

V. Data-driven decisions and measuring progress

Data driven decisions coupled with monitoring progress is a researched based practice that is used to assess students' learning and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. To implement this practice, a student's current level of performance is determined through various assessments, and the results of the assessments are used to identify learning goals that will guide the student's achievement throughout the school year.

Monitoring progress will include on-going embedded periodic assessments that are based on Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment. Each student's academic performance will be measured on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, quarterly) and progress toward meeting the student's goals will be measured by comparing expected rates of learning to actual rates of learning. Based on these measurements, students who are not performing at the proficient level will be identified and instruction will be adjusted as needed. Thus, the student's progression of achievement is examined and instructional techniques are developed to meet the individual learning needs of the student.

1. A well implemented data driven decision making and monitoring progress plan should be developed and should result in the following benefits:
 - a. Informed instructional decisions;
 - b. Accelerated learning as a result of intentional instruction to master learning goals;
 - c. Documentation of student progress for accountability purposes;
 - d. Efficient communication to stakeholders about students' progress;
 - e. Higher teacher expectations for students; and
 - f. Reduced referral of students to special education.
2. To ensure data-driven decisions and effective monitoring of progress, crisis schools will implement on-going embedded curriculum based assessments as well as standardized assessment to measure reading and math progress at all levels. Commonwealth School Improvement Funds will be used for purchase of standardized assessments where none are available at the school and district level. Decisions for planning continuous improvement can be guided by the outcomes. Results from these assessments as well as analysis of student work and other diagnostic information will be reflected in the student's individual graduation plans and in teacher professional growth plans.
3. There are challenges that are involved with monitoring student progress. Teachers need more information and support on the process and its effectiveness to ensure commitment and proper implementation; therefore, ongoing training is needed to help teachers implement and create meaningful researched based strategies to address

- student deficits and accommodate differences in background. The Kentucky Department of Education field staff, in collaboration with the Instructional Support Network, will provide professional development in monitoring student progress and data driven decision-making and planning. Additional professional development will include analysis of the Kentucky Performance Report (KPR), No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Report, analysis of student work to ensure meaningful feedback on student learning for instructional purposes, and proper certified personnel evaluation (CPE) training.
4. As a part of the scholastic audit/review process, the school and district will receive an assessment of the CPE process to determine the level of effectiveness on student achievement. As a result of the CPE assessment, the superintendent and/or principal may be required to complete intensive professional development in the implementation of certified personnel evaluation to ensure effectiveness and improvement on student performance.
 5. Using both curriculum based and standardized assessments, schools and districts can analyze the growth students make by measuring what each student knows when he or she arrives in a classroom at the beginning of each year and then documenting the student's growth throughout the year. Thus the collected objective data on instructional effectiveness and student growth can be utilized to identify teachers who are excelling and utilize that information to assist others. Incentives to assist others who are in need of mentoring will be identified and provided. Teachers whose students are consistently not showing progress over time will be identified and offered intensive, targeted, professional growth planning opportunities. Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) or problem solving teams will be created to address interventions for the students who require more individualized planning and interventions prior to experiencing success.
 6. Use of monitoring progress leads to more efficient decisions and appropriately targeted instructional techniques that move students to breakthrough performance in attainment of important Kentucky content standards of achievement.